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RaceWeek

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WORLD ENDURANCE
ECLIPSE AWARDS
UAE ARABIAN SHOW

READY... SET...
SUPER SATURDAY

special FEATURE



Qatar Jumping Team

SHOW
JUMPING

FEI World Cup Qualifiers

The Arab League jumps off

The new Arab League of FEI World Cup Jumping qualifiers started out in Latakia in August, followed by Faqra, Lebanon and two shows in Egypt, before the beginning of the year when it moved into the Gulf region.

SHOWS IN ABU DHABI, Sharjah and Ajman marked the UAE as the only country in the league to host three World Cup qualifier grand prix shows this season.

SAUDI INVADES SHARJAH

Sharjah's three-day international show in January featured entries from riders representing 19 countries including the UAE. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia dominated the team competition on the second day with a decisive win from members, recent Pan Arab gold medal winner and veteran Olympic Kamal Bahamdan, HRH Prince Abdullah bin Metab, Fahad Al Eid and Abdullah Al Sharbatly. German riders Jeorg Naeve, Dieter Mehrens, Ajman-based Thilo Krapf and Katherina Offel rode to second while the home team of Ahmed Ameen, Abdullah Humaid, Sheikha Latifa Al Maktoum and Ali Al Romihi took third place for the UAE.

The World Cup Grand Prix was sponsored by Sharjah Airport International Free Zone Authority and was the climax of the show on the final day. Twenty-nine riders tackled the 13 fences of the first round comprising 16 elements. Course builder was Olaf Petersen who set a formidable test with challenging pacing and turns forcing riders to think their way around. Only four riders clocked up a clear from the first round and, along with seven four-fault riders, progressed to the second round. Prince Abdullah bin Metab was the first to go clear in a fast time of 83.51 then Sheikha Latifa Al Maktoum followed suite with only a slightly slower time. Seven riders intervened before Kamal Bahamdan entered the arena with his Pan Arab gold heroine, the grey mare Casita, and the pair put in a smooth and steady clear. Next was Ibrahim Bisharat of Jordan aboard his Athens Olympic moun-

Faleh Suwaid
Al Ajami of Kuwait
gets ready to jump
with Oxlinda
at Doha

© Courtesy Qatar Equestrian Federation



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the talented gelding Qwinto and they gained the final clear of the first round. These four all carried their good form into the second round to score double clears. Those carrying forward four faults jumped first then Prince Abdullah was the first of the clears. He put in another faultless round to finish in 49.49, good enough to earn him eventual third place. Next was Sheikha Latifa and her Irish-bred Cover's Pride and the pair put in their second clear of the competition in 50.25. Kamal Bahamdan's Casita made it look too easy as she glided swiftly over the reduced course of seven fences to finish in a time of 45 seconds and for Ibrahim Bisharat the gauntlet was on the ground. He put in a determined challenge to fall short of Bahamdan's time by a mere 3/100ths of a second, good enough for second place. Bahamdan was thrilled with Casita's performance.

"It is her first show since the Pan Arab Games and she is incredible. She just tried so hard," he said. "She had the last fence down in the first round of the Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi (the previous week) but her fitness level has definitely improved in the week."

ONWARD TO AJMAN

Ajman hosted the third Arab League Grand Prix during its three-day Zayed International Show Jumping Championship 2005. The Ajman Equestrian Club hosted its first jumping show a year ago and organisers Majed Al Garsoghiu and Christine Krapf have proved themselves proficient in finding sponsors to make the show a magnet for international riders. Total prize money for the three days was AED330,000 and a car to the winner of the World Cup Grand Prix.

After several days of rain the final competitions were preceded by torrents that left vehicles axle deep in the streets of Ajman. Earlier on the final day the jumping ring held a lake in one corner but the field drained and dried out by the time of the afternoon competitions and the classes proceeded on reasonably firm footing.

Designer Klaus Holle presented a challenging course for the mini grand prix that preceded the main World Cup event. Following on from their success at Sharjah the Saudi riders dominated by taking five of the top 10 finishing positions. Sydney Olympic bronze medallist Khalid Al Eid came out on top with a double clear and a second round time of 33.68. Bulgarian rider Rosen Raichev only 1/100th of a second behind took second place while Egypt's Sharaf Nassar was third with Ophelia. Saudi Ramzy Al Duhani filled the fourth spot with countryman Prince Abdullah bin Metab in fifth, and Kamal Bahamdan in sixth with Meatloaf.

The eighth and final class of the show was the FEI World Cup Grand Prix and Holle engineered a tricky course of 13 fences ending with a treble combination discouraging a mad rush for the finish line and forcing riders to keep their attention until the very last stride. This ploy proved no problem however for the likes of Germany's Deiter Mehrens, or to KSA's Abdulla Sharbatly with his talented horse Gerry Copperfield. Sheikha Latifa was another who took the course in her stride with her horse Cover's Pride who rarely has a rail down. Other first round clears came from Kamal Bahamdan, Ibrahim Bisharat, Emile Karim Fares and Joerg Naeve. Both

TOP LEFT: Noaf Al Essa of Kuwait with Nad at Doha

TOP RIGHT: UAE's Ahmed Al Ameen with Caleeto, World Cup Grand Prix winner at Doha

BELOW LEFT: Kamal Bahamdan and Casita winner at Sharjah

BELOW RIGHT: Awad Al Qahtani and Adonis in Qatar